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Frogs.



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THE FROGS
OF
ARISTOPHANES

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OF
ARISTOPHANES

EDUCATION
YOUNG
TRANSLATED BY
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11

THE FROGS

ACT I.

SCENE I.

SCENE: *A country lane, with the house of
HERAKLES on the stage right.*

*Enter, from the left, DIONYSUS, walking, and
XANTHIAS, riding an ass and carrying a bundle
on a stick over his shoulder.*

XANTHIAS. Am I to make one of the common hits
That always 'send the audience into fits?

DIONYSUS. Yes, anything you like but "Oh, this
weight!"

For that's the kind of thing I've come to hate.

X. Or something else that's witty and expressive?

DI. Only don't mention that your load's oppressive!

X. Well, some real humour then, is that the trick?

DI. Please don't, unless I want to be made sick. 10

X. (*Indignantly.*)

What was the use of loading me up thus

If I am not to talk like Phrynichus?¹

¹ The comic poet, not the politician. His play *The Muses* was exhibited the same day as *The Frogs*, and took the second place.

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Why, Lykis and Ameipsias always
Have comic slaves, with bundles, in their plays!

DI. (*Shaking his finger at him.*)

Now don't you do it! When I'm in the stalls
And see that sort of gag, it simply galls;
I'm more than twelve months older when it's done.

X. (*Ruefully.*) Ay, but my neck's the real unlucky one,
It gets the galling, and mayn't have the fun! 20

DI. (*Appealing to the audience.*)

What insolence is this and monstrous 'side'!
I toil on foot and let this fellow ride,
I, Dionysus, son of—Demijohn,
To save him being tired and put upon!

X. (*Sulkily.*) 'Tis put upon me.

DI. No, you're riding, you!

X. But I've got this (*pointing to his bundle*).

DI. How?

X. Pretty badly, too!

DI. But what you've got—doesn't the donkey bear it?

X. No, sir! I carry what I've got, I'll swear it!

DI. How *can* you bear what some one else is bearing?

X. I don't know, but my shoulder finds it wearing. 30

DI. Well, if the ass is useless, as you said,
Pick up the ass and carry him instead.

X. O Lord! why wasn't I in that sea fight!
I'd have been free, and bidden you good-night!

DI. (*Noticing the house.*)

Get off! I've got there walking, after all.

This is the first place where I was to call.

(XANTHIAS *dismounts, and the donkey presently goes off.* DI. *hammers upon the door with his club.*)

Hi, porter! slave, I say, slave, let me enter!

HERAKLES. (*Opening the door and looking out.*)

Who's knocking there? I thought it was a centaur!
(*Stepping back and bursting out laughing.*)

Great heaven! what *is* that?

DI. (*To XANTHIAS.*) Did you see, my lad? 40

X. What?

DI. How I scared him.

X. Yes, lest you were mad!

HER. Laugh! Oh, by'r Lady, I am nearly split!

I bite my lips, but roar in spite of it.

DI. (*Coming forward to the door.*)

Here, my good friend, there's something that I
want.

HER. (*Comes out, still choking with amusement.*)

I'm trying to stop laughing, but I can't.

What is this dress you're masquerading in?

A lady's yellow blouse, and lion's skin!

That's a queer combination—club and slipper!

What's brought you out from home? are you
turned tripper?

DI. Oh, I was serving on the—Kleisthenes.¹

HER. Were you in action?

¹ An Athenian of disreputable character.

DI. Yes, and if you please
We sank a dozen of them, more or less. 50

HER. You two!

DI. Why not?

HER. "It was a dream," I guess.

DI. Why, yes, and as I sat upon the boat
And read *Andromeda*,¹ a passion smote
My heart, quite hard, you know, and by surprise.

HER. Passion? how big?

DI. Little, just Molon's² size!

HER. For a woman?

DI. No.

HER. A boy, then?

DI. None of these.

HER. A man, then?

DI. Sh!

HER. Weren't you with Kleisthenes?

DI. Don't mock, I'm really in a parlous way,
Such "melancholy marks me for its prey."

HER. What sort, my brother?

DI. Well, it's hard to state it: 60
A figure might perhaps elucidate it.
Have you ever suddenly begun to crave
For porridge?

HER. Rather! I should think I have!

DI. D'you understand, or shall I try again?

¹ A play of Euripides.

² A very tall actor in the plays of Euripides.

HER. Porridge is clear enough, I see that plain.

DI. It's just that kind of love consumes me for
Euripides.

HER. And him just dead, O lor!

DI. And no one shall persuade me not to go
And fetch him.

HER. What, to Hades, down below?

DI. If there's a road still lower down, I'll go it. 70

HER. What do you want?

DI. A really clever poet;

For some are dead, only the bad survive.

HER. But Iophon, is he not still alive?

DI. That's the one good thing left,—if it does count
too;

But I'm not sure how much it does amount to.

HER. Then why not Sophokles, who's far ahead,
If you feel bound to fetch one of the dead?

DI. No, not until I've tried what Iophon
Can write without his father, all alone.

Euripides, too—such a knave as he 80

Would gladly try to run away with me;

While He was always placid and at peace.

HER. Where's Agathon?

DI. He's gone; he's quitted Greece;

A proper poet and in great request.

HER. Poor man! where to?

DI. The Islands of the Bl— Macedonians!

HER. Pythangelus? and Xenokles?

DI. Oh, damn!

X. (*Who has been getting more and more impatient, aside.*)

But I'm clean out of it, though here I am,
And my poor shoulder is as sore as sore!

HER. But aren't there budding poets by the score 90
Besides, who in a talking handicap
Could easily give Euripides a lap?

DI. Leaves without fruit they are, mere chattering
fools,

Murderers of Art, and swallows' chirping-
schools;

They get their chorus,¹ and are no more seen:
Only a dirty mark shows where they've been!
But for true Genius you may seek in vain,
One who can speak, I mean, in noble strain.

HER. How "Genius"?

DI. Thus—the true creative spark
That tosses off as a casual remark 99
"The foot of Time," "Jove's cottage in the sky,"
Or else, "A soul that does not mean to lie,
With a tongue that perjures itself separately."

HER. Does that suit *you*?

DI. It's simply my delight.

HER. Oh, come! It's wretched stuff now, honour
bright!

¹ Get their play exhibited. The licensing magistrate granted the expenses of the play, of which the chorus was originally the principal part.

DI. Keep to *your* line of business, let me be!

HER. And yet, it *does* seem villainous to me.

DI. (*Contemptuously.*)

Dining's all *you* can teach!

X. (*Aside.*) I'm out of it!

DI. But, for the job that's brought me with this kit
 Made up like you—I want to get a tip
 About your friends on that dog-stealing trip. 110
 Tell me the harbours and the bakeries,
 The lodgings, respectable and otherwise.
 Tell me the wayside inns, the springs, the roads,
 Towns, restaurants, and hostesses—abodes
 Of feseft bugs.

X. (*Aside.*) And I'm out of it still.

HER. (*Sarcastically.*)

D'you mean to go? What recklessness!

DI. (*With offended dignity.*) You will
 Be kind enough to drop all that, and tell
 The quickest way for me to get to Hell,
 And not too cold a one, mind, and not too hot.

HER. (*Giving his information very slowly.*)

Let's see—what road shall I first tell him?—
 what?—

There's one that starts you from "The Rope and
 Thwart"—

By hanging.

DI. Don't, that's such a stuffy sort!

HER. Well, there's a short cut, then, a beaten way,

Viâ "The Pestle and Mortar."

DI. Hemlock, eh?

HER. Just so.

DI. Ugh! That's too stormy and too cold;
Your calves get frozen at the start, I'm told.

HER. How would you like one downhill, and direct
too?

DI. First rate! Long walks are what I most object to.

HER. Stroll round to Keramicus,

DI. After that—

HER. Climb the high tower.

DI. (*Impatiently.*) What next shall I be at? 130

HER. And when you stand upon the very top,
Watch the fire-signal for the torch-race drop,
And when the people shout out "Let her go!"
Then let yourself go too.

DI. Where?

HER. Right below!

DI. But I should pound my brains to sausages:
That's not the way I'll go.

HER. Well, then, what is?

DI. The one *you* went.

HER. That's a long voyage to take,
For all at once you'll come upon a lake
That's simply fathomless and very wide.

DI. Well, then, how shall I reach the other side?

HER. An aged sailor-man will ferry you
For threepence in an infant-sized canoe.

DI. Whew!

The almighty threepence everywhere in force!
Who brought it there?

HER. Why, Theseus did, of course.
Then you'll see snakes and every kind of beast—
Awful! (*Chuckles.*)

DI. (*In great alarm.*)

Don't, *I'm* not frightened in the least,
You won't scare *me*.

HER. And then you'll see a flood
Of ever-flowing sewage, seas of mud,
Where you will notice in the garbage floating
Those who loved bogus company promoting,
Who thrashed mamma, or blacked their father's
eyes,

150

Perjured themselves, or quoted A—— rhapsodies.

DI. The right place for them; but you ought to add,
“Or danced a ‘pas de quatre,’” it's quite as bad.

HER. And after that you'll hear some music play,
And see a light, as clear as any day
On earth, and myrtle groves and happy bands,
Women and men, and clapping of glad hands.

DI. They are—?

HER. “The mysteries” are their profession,

X. (*Aside.*) And I'm the ass that walks in the pro-
cession;

But not one second more will I hold these. 160

[*Throws down the bundle.*]

HER. And they will tell you anything you please.
 It's close to Pluto's palace door they dwell,
 Hard by the road. So, brother, fare thee well.

[*Exit.*]

DI. Good-bye!

(*Turning to XANTHIAS.*)

Take up again the bundle—you!

X. (*Sulkily.*) Before I've dropped it!

DI. Yes, and quickly too.

X. Oh, master, don't, I beg you! hire instead
 One of these fellows who are really dead;
 It's just their business.

DI. Ay, but if I should

Not find one?

X. Well then, *I* must.

DI. Well and good.

Enter two Undertakers, carrying a Corpse on a stretcher.

Why, here's a corpse just being carried by. 170

Hullo! It's you I mean, you dead man, hi!

My traps for Hades! Will you take the job?

CORPSE. How much?

DI. (*Pointing to bundle.*) This only.

CORPSE. If you'll pay two bob.

DI. By Jove! that's sheer extortion, far too dear!

CORPSE. Move on, you undertakers; do you hear?

DI. My good man, wait a bit, let's compromise.

CORPSE. Don't waste your breath, two shillings is my price.

DI. Take eighteenpence.

CORPSE. I'd come to life again first! [*Exit.*]

X. Bad luck go with you for a most accurst
Conceited knave! I'll go then, I don't mind.

DI. You're a good fellow, Xanthias, and kind.

SCENE II.

SCENE: *The Styx.*

Enter DIONYSUS *and* XANTHIAS.

DI. Let's to the boat.

CHARON. (*Within.*) Ahoy!

X. What's this?

DI. The lake 180

He told us of.

[CHARON *brings his boat to the wharf.*

And here's the boat to take.

[CHARON *comes ashore.*

X. Yes, by Poseidon! and there's Charon too.

DI. How d'you do, Charon? Charon, how d'you do?

CH. (*Bawling.*)

Who's for the Rest from toil, the Land of Peace,
The plain of Lethe, or the Ass's fleece?

Who's for the Dogs, Crimea, or Hellgate?

DI. I.

CH. All aboard! Make haste!

- DI. (*Waggishly.*) Where did you state
 You went to? To the dogs? Now is that true?
 CH. Of course it is; I'm going there for you.
 Get in now.
 DI. (*Getting into the boat.*) Come on, Xanthias.
 CH. Slaves not taken. 190
 Unless he's fought at sea and saved his bacon.
 X. Jove, no! I couldn't, for my eyes were sore.¹
 CH. (*Getting in.*)
 Then you must run all round by the lake shore.
 X. And meet you, where?
 CH. The stone of Withering,
 Beside the seat.
 DI. D'you see?
 X. I'll find the thing.
 Oh dear! oh dear! whatever did I meet
 This morning when I stepped into the street!
 [*Exit.*]
 CH. (*To DI.*) Sit at the oar.
 [DIONYSUS *sits down upon the oar.*
 CH. (*Shouting.*) Whoever else is going
 Must hurry up! (*Turns round and sees DIONYSUS.*)
 Hullo! what *are* you doing?
 DI. (*Innocently.*)
 What am I doing? What else should I be
 But sitting on it, as you said to me?
 CH. Sit down here on the thwart, you great fat lout!

¹ Ophthalmia was a common excuse for malingering.

DI. There, then! (*Sits down.*) 201

CH. Put out your hands now, and reach out.

DI. (*Putting up his hands as if boxing.*)

There, then!

CH. Stop all that foolery! You want
To feel your stretcher, and row hard.

DI. I can't.

Untrained, unsalted, never in a skiff,
How *can* I row?

CH. Easy enough, for if
You dip your blade you'll hear the loveliest chime
Of swan-frogs, wonderful!

DI. (*Resignedly.*) Well, set the time.

CH. (*Chanting.*) Ahoy, oh! Ahoy, oh!

[DIONYSUS *begins rowing.*]

GHOSTS of FROGS from Attica.

(*Below, with flute accompaniment.*)

Brekekekex koax koax!

Brekekekex koax koax!

Children of spring and lake,
Raise together the choral strain,
Echoing back the flute again;
Sweet is the song we make.

This is the hymn we used to raise
In heavenborn Dionysus' praise
At Limnae,¹ in the osier,

¹ Limnae, the name of a marshy spot at Athens, where an ancient temple of Dionysus stood.

When the good folk in a tipsy throng¹
 Came with their sacred pitchers along,
 Down to' my temple enclosure. 220

DI. *I'm* getting sore just where I sit,
 But you, I suppose, don't care a bit!

FROGS. Brekekekex koax koax!
 Brekekekex koax!

DI. Oh, curses upon you, koax and all!
 You're perfectly useless, except to bawl.

FROGS. Likely enough,
 You meddling muf!
 For I'm the darling of the Muses, 229
 And the goat-legged god that the pan-pipe uses;
 And I'm the object of desire
 To Phoebus Apollo who plays the lyre,
 Because of the reeds I keep
 For the bridge of his fiddle,
 That grow in the middle
 Of watery places deep.
 Brekekekex koax!

DI. My hands and my fingers are blistering,
 And the sweat's running down me like everything,
 And then you promptly pop up and sing—

FROGS. Brekekekex koax koax!
 Brekekekex koax!

¹ "The Pitchers" was the name given to the third day of the festival Anthesteria. The second day being "The Opening of the Casks" accounts for the condition of the populace on the third day.

DI. Melodious people, be quiet, I pray. 240

FROGS. On the contrary, sir, we have plenty to say,

And haven't a notion of stopping,

If ever on earth when the sunshine was bright

In shrilling and diving we took our delight,

Through the sedges luxuriant hopping ;

Or if we went down to get out of the thunder,

And sent up a quavering warble from under

The water, with bubbles a-popping.

Brekekekex koax koax !

Brekekekex koax ! 250

DI. I feel that it's taking—this koaccination !

FROGS. If it does, it will cause us a little vexation.

DI. But it's many times worse for me, you know,

If I break into pieces with trying to row.

FROGS. Brekekekex koax koax !

DI. Shriek away ! What do I mind your attacks !

FROGS. But, for all that, we'll yell and shout

All day, as long as our throats last out. 260

Brekekekex koax !

DI. (*Triumphantly.*)

I've got it now. Brekekekex koax !

You never shall beat me at this little game,

FROGS. But we'll be victorious all the same.

DI. Never ! You'll find me still going strong

If I have to be yelling the whole day long—

(*At the top of his voice.*)

BREKEKEKEX KOAX KOAX !

Until I compel you to cry out "pax."

(*The Frogs make no answer.*)

I thought I should presently stop your quacks!

SCENE III.

SCENE: *The shore on the further side of the Styx.*

CH. (*In the boat.*)

Easy all! ship your oars! and pay your fare
After you've landed.

[CHARON and DIONYSUS come ashore.

DI. Take your threepence, there! 270

[*Exit* CHARON.

(*Shouting.*) Where be you, Xanthias? Xanthias,
where be you?

X. (*Within.*) Yoho!

DI. This way!

Enter XANTHIAS.

X. Master, I'm glad to see you.

DI. What's yonder country like?

X. It's all quite dark

And full of mud.

DI. Did you by chance remark
The liars, and the people he maligned
For jumping on their parents?

X. (*Turning him round and pointing to the audience.*)

Are you blind?¹

DI. I see them now! They're in the Pit, by Jove!

Well, what comes next?

X. I think we'd better move;

This is the place that gentleman spoke about,

That's full of bogies.

DI. Won't I pay him out!

He piled it up to make me get a fright 280

Because he knew I was a man of might,

For fear his own achievements should be beat.

Nothing like Herakles for sheer conceit!

I'd like a small adventure with a devil

To raise the journey's rather prosy level.

X. (*Pretending.*)

By Jove, what's that! some sort of noise I hear.

DI. Wh—where?

X. Behind us.

DI. Go and guard the rear.

[XANTHIAS *goes behind.*

X. In front now.

DI. Get in front.

[DIONYSUS *hangs back.* XANTHIAS *goes forward and peers into the darkness.*

X. Lord, what a beast!

¹ Ill treatment of aged parents seems to have been too common at Athens. "Stop," said the old man to his son, who had dragged him as far as the door, "I only dragged *my* father as far as that!"

DI. (*Hiding his face.*) What?

X. Awful! with a dozen shapes at least!
It's turning to a cow—a mule—a maid,
Comely at that. 289

DI. (*With alacrity.*) Where is she? Who's afraid?

X. But she's gone now, turned to a dog instead.

DI. Ah, that's Empusa!

X. Anyhow, her head
Is all ablaze.

DI. Has she one brazen peg?

X. Of course, and cawdung for the other leg.

DI. Where shall I hide?

X. (*Trying to conceal his amusement, to the audience.*)
I need it worse, I think.

DI. (*Looking wildly round catches sight of the Priest
of DIONYSUS sitting in the middle of the
front row in the audience.*)

Priest, save me! and let's go and have our drink.

X. It's all up with us, Herakles, my lord.

DI. I beg and pray you not to breathe that word,
Or call me by that name.

X. Well, Dionysus.

DI. Why, that is still more like to compromise us. 300

X. (*Contemptuously.*) Go back the way you came!
(*He pretends to look forward again.*)

Here, master, here!

DI. What's up?

X. It's all right now, you needn't fear,

For, as the actor said not long ago,
 "The stormy winds now weaselly do blow."¹
 Empusa's vanished.

DI. Swear?

X. Yes, I declare it!

DI. Again!

X. By Jove, yes!

DI. Swear!

X. By Jove, I swear it!

DI. Dear, dear, a fearful sight! how pale I turned!

X. (*Pointing to "the fat, red priest."*)

But he there blushed for you, and simply burned.

DI. Oh dear! why are these horrid things annoy-
 ing me? 309

I'm sure some god is bent upon destroying me;

Whom shall I call the author of the crime?

"The sky, Jove's cottage," or "the foot of Time"?

[*Music within.*]

X. Hi!

DI. What's the matter?

X. Don't you hear it?

DI. Well?

X. The sound of flutes.

DI. Yes, and the torches' smell

That's most suggestive of the Mysteries.

"Dissemble," and we'll listen. Quiet, please!

CHORUS. (*Within.*) Iacchus, O Iacchus!

Iacchus, O Iacchus!

¹ A mispronunciation made by an actor named Hegelochus.

- X. Master, I've got it, that's the very party
 He told us of; they're the Illuminati;
 At least they keep on singing all the while
 "Iacchus" in Diagoras's style. 320
- DI. I think so too. But just you hold your tongue,
 Or else we shan't hear what is being sung.

Enter the Chorus from the stage left.

- CHORUS. Come forth, Iacchus, come!
 And leave thy honoured home
 To dance upon this lawn, and here to meet
 The brotherhood
 Of holy men and good,
 Iacchus, O Iacchus!
 And waving round thy brows 330
 A wreath of myrtle boughs
 That teems with leaf and berry,
 With fearless feet
 Strike up the measure, unrestrained and merry,
 With grace that every sense can please,
 The mystic dance of holy votaries.

- X. Now, by our Lady, Great Persephone,
 A heavenly whiff of roast pork¹ reaches me!

- DI. Hush! you may get a sausage presently.

- CHORUS. Awake! our morning star 340
 Comes brandishing afar
 His torch of flame. The meadow gleams with
 light.

¹ Pigs were sacrificed at the Mysteries.

The weight of years
 And sorrow disappears,
 Iacchus, O Iacchus!
 And hoar decrepitude
 Falls off from limbs renewed.
 Thou blessed one advancing

 Step out aright, 350

And lead thy youthful throng with torches
 glancing

 To foot the dances as of yore
 Upon the marsh's flower-spangled floor.

THE LEADER. Ho! clear the way for us, we pray,
 and speak with breath abated,

Each one whose mind is unrefined and uninitiated,
 Who has not glanced at, much less danced at,
 true Artistic revelries,

And draws the line at old Cratinus' bully Bacchic
 devilries,

Who makes requests for dirty jests when wholly
 out of season,

Stalks with a frown about the town, and coun-
 tenances treason,

And stirs the same, and fans the flame, to turn it
 to his profit, 360

And in a crisis, if he's high in power, makes
 money of it,

Or who betrays a ship or place, or smuggles to
 Epidaurus

Pitch, rowlock-flaps, and linen wraps, when paid
to tax them for us,

Or by his arts from foreign parts gets for our
foes remittances,

Or, though free speech is in his reach, would
dock the poets' pittances

In sulky rage against the Stage's licensed criti-
cism.

All such I scorn, and hereby warn with triple
exorcism

To clear the way for our Mystic lay. And you,
strike up the singing 370

For the holy rite that lasts all night, which this
high feast is bringing.

CHORUS. (*To slow music.*)

Boldly lead and each one follow
To the flowery meadow's hollow;
Dancing, laughing, jesting, chaffing;
We have had our fill of eating.

Forward, then, your anthem raising,
Our protecting goddess praising;
This year and the next our land she 380
Guards, in spite of gauger's cheating.

THE LEADER. Change the metre, rather fleeter, hail
Demeter, harvest Queen;

You must greet her and entreat her with a
sweeter tune, I ween.

CHORUS. Goddess mysterious,
 Grant me all day
 Beneath thy protection
 To dance and to play.

Merry and serious
 Skilfully blend, 390
 And by thy direction
 Be crowned in the end.

THE LEADER. Stop, and now in due succession let
 another tune be sung,
 Call the god to our procession who is ever fair
 and young.

CHORUS. Honoured of all men, Iacchus, who makest
 The sweetest of hymns for a festival day,
 Lead to thy mother,¹ and show how thou takest 400
 The lightest of toil for the longest of way.
 Lord of frivolity, dancing and song,
 Lovely Iacchus, escort us along.

Tattered my tunic is, soiled is my sandal,
 Thine this invention to cheaply combine
 Practical jokes with an absence of scandal,
 Rending of raiment with dancing and wine.

¹ To Demeter at Eleusis; the Chorus speak as though they were making the annual procession there from Athens.

The horseplay here referred to, which took place at the crossing of a certain bridge, was supposed to have originated in a wish to amuse Demeter, and so comfort her for the loss of Persephone.

Lord of frivolity, dancing and song,
 Lovely Iacchus, escort us along.

Just then I saw a companion in jollity,
 Sweet little girl, with the tail of my eye, 410
 Dancing along, looking, oh, so décolletée!
 Torn is her tunic and pulled all awry.
 Lord of frivolity, dancing and song,
 Lovely Iacchus, escort us along.

DI. I'm nothing if not sociable, with pretty girls
 in view.

I'd like to get a dance with her.

X. And that's what I should too.

CHORUS. Knife of satire now unsheathe,
 Stick it into Archidame ;
 He's turned seven, and it's a shame
 That he hasn't cut his—pedigree !

He's a leader none the less
 Of the rabble overhead,
 Whom we call the truly dead, 420
 And their crowning wickedness.

DI. Pardon, gentlemen and ladies,
 Would you kindly tell us where
 Pluto's house is? We're a pair
 Of strangers just arrived in Hades.

ONE OF THE CHORUS.

Far afield you need not wander,
Do not ask another question
If I offer a suggestion
That you'll find it standing yonder.

DI. (*To XANTHIAS.*)

Pick the bundle up, my man.

X. (*Sulkily.*) That's as stale a piece of news
As the boast of "Father Zeus"
Made by the Corinthian!¹

THE LEADER. Forward now to dancing-ring, forward
to the flowery groves, 440

All you who join the game, and sing at the feast
our goddess loves.

And I will go and join the show, join the pretty
girls, I mean,

And give them light where all the night they
keep it up before the Queen.

CHORUS. Away to the meadows

Where roses abound,

Where asphodel blossoms

Grow thick on the ground ;

We will dance our own measure,

The loveliest sight,

450

¹ Corinthians seem to have been fond of boasting of descent from Zeus. There is also an allusion to vermin in the word "Corinthian," which is more easily kept in a bundle of rugs than in the English language.

Where the spirits of music
And beauty unite.

For on us alone shineth
The sun in his mirth,

Who were holy and just

When we lived on the earth.

[*The women of the Chorus march out.*

SCENE IV.

SCENE: *The door of Pluto's house.*

DI. Look here now, ring or knock? I wish I knew;
I wonder what the folk about here do. 461

X. Don't waste your time, but hammer at the door.
What good's a lion's skin without a roar?

DI. (*Knocking.*) Ho! slave!

AEACUS. (*Opening the door.*) Who's there?

DI. (*Pompously.*) 'Tis Herakles the great.

AE. O loathsome, shameless, and insatiate!

O doubly, triply, and quadruply vile!

Who carried off our Cerberus by guile,
Stole him away out of my guardianship

And choked him. Now I have you on the hip;

Such a black-hearted rock of Styx's flood 470

And crag of Acheron that drips with blood

Have got you in their keeping safe at last,

And ranging hounds of Hell shall hold you fast;

Echidna, too, the hundred-headed beast,
 Shall devastate your bowels for a feast ;
 And then your lungs—don't fancy this a sham,
 pray—

Shall be mishandled by a Tarshish lamprey ;
 Your kidneys, guts and all, in gory state,
 Be rent by Gorgon hags from Billingsgate !
 I'm off to fetch them at my utmost speed ! [*Exit.*
 [DIONYSUS *collapses on the ground.*

X. Hi ! what's the matter ?

DI. (*Feebly.*) Oh, I'm ill indeed !

Call on some god.

X. You idiot ! get up quick. 480

Not before strangers !

DI. But I'm very sick.

Just bring the sponge and put it to my heart.

X. There, take it.

DI. Put it—

X. Where ? Is that the part

You keep your heart in ?

DI. Generally, no ;

But in its fear it slipped a bit below.

X. Well, of all gods and men—you cowardly beast !

DI. Cowardly ? I didn't throw it up, at least. [*Gets up.*

X. That's courage, by Poseidon ! 491

DI. 'Tis, by Zeus !

And weren't you terrified at his abuse

And threatening ?

X. By Jove! I didn't care.

DI. Look here, then, since your courage is so rare,
Let's change our parts; you don the lion's hide
And take this club, as you're so brave inside,
And I'll be baggage-mule for you in turn.

[XANTHIAS *puts down his bundle and
takes the lion-skin and club.*

X. (*Domineeringly.*)

Pick it up quick, then! There, you've got to learn;
And see if I, Herakleoxanthias,
Shall be like you a coward and an ass! 500

DI. By Jove! you look the real Athenian lag.
Well, now, supposing I take up the bag.

Enter a Maidservant from the house.

MAIDSERVANT.

Come in at once, dear Herakles; don't wait.
When goddess heard that you were come, she
straight
Baked loaves, and cooked two or three porridge
bowls
Of rolled oats, popped in the oven cakes and rolls,
And set a whole ox roasting on the coals.
Come in, do!

X. (*In some embarrassment.*) Please excuse me.

M. Lackaday!

I'm not a-going to let *you* run away.
There's chicken being fricasseed, you know, 510
And apple dumplings baking in a row,

And the best wine is being put to cool.

Come in with me.

X. Really no, thanks.

M. You fool!

You shan't get off, though. There's a lady there,

A Star of the Profession, if you care

To see her, and she's well worth looking at,

And a few chorus girls besides.

X. What's that?

M. And the cook says, "The veal cutlets," says she,

"Will be served up almost immediately."

X. My compliments to the ladies of the ballet, 520

I'm coming. (In a lordly tone.)

Bring the luggage—where's my valet?

DI. Hold on there, Xanthias! you don't suppose

I meant it seriously—this changing clothes?

Drop this tomfoolery, it's become a bore;

Pick up the traps and carry them once more.

X. What's up? It surely wasn't in your mind to

Rob me of what you gave?

DI. I'm not *inclined* to,

I do it. Put the skin down!

X. I protest,

And call the gods to witness I'm oppressed!

DI. The gods be blowed! why, here's a fine suggestion!

It's palpably absurd, out of the question, 530

For you who are a mere slave, son of none,

To think of posing as Alkmena's son!

X. Oh, well, all right then, if you must, you must.
 You'll need me soon, that's all, if heaven is just.

[DIONYSUS *changes back to* HERAKLES.]

CHORUS. Any man who's worth the name,
 Who has the wits to play the game,
 And has been in many a scrimmage,
 Stands not like a graven image,
 But when the weather looks untoward
 Promptly shifts his quarters leeward;
 But to get the softest place
 Is a special mark of grace;
 If one does it always, he's
 A regular Theramenes.

540

SCENE V.

SCENE: *The same.*

Enter a Landlady and PLATHANE *her maid.*

LANDLADY. Plathane! Plathane! here's the man of sin,
 The rogue who came that day into the inn 550
 And ate up sixteen loaves.

PL. By Jove! that's he.

X. (*Aside.*) Trouble for someone!

L. And the fricassee,
 'Twas twenty portions; lor, how he did snatch it,
 Penny a mouthful!

X. (*Aside.*) Someone's going to catch it!

L. And all that garlic!

DI. Nonsense, my good woman,
You don't know what you're saying.

L. Are you assumin',
Because you've got those shoes, that I'd forget?
And all that pickle I've not mentioned yet!

PL. Good gracious, no! nor yet the cheese and puddin'!
He ate the very dishes that they stood in! 560

L. And when I brought him in my bill, the fellow
Looked thunder at me and began to bellow.

X. Just like him; it's a way he always had.

L. And drew his sword, pretending to be mad.

PL. Drat him, he did.

L. And we two got the scares,
And made a bolt for it at once upstairs;
Then off he went, with the matting under his arm.

X. *That's* like him. But you should have raised
the alarm.

L. Of course; do go and call my champion Kleon.¹

PL. And call for me Hyperbolus, if you see 'un; 570
We'll grind him down.

L. You gormandising hound,
Nothing would please me better than to pound
With a stone those teeth that gobbled up my
wares.

PL. I'd like to fling you down the bottomless stairs.

¹ These two famous demagogues were both available, since Cleon had died in 422, and Hyperbolus was murdered in 411.

L. I'd like to take a knife to your windpipe,
The one with which you hooked down all my tripe.

PL. I'm off for Kleon. In an hour or so
He'll serve a writ and screw out all you know.

[*Exeunt* Landlady and PLATHANE.]

DI. (*Very insinuatingly.*)

Xanthias, if I don't love you, I'll be shot.

X. (*Angrily.*)

I know what you are up to. Stop that rot! 580
I *won't* be Herakles!

DI. Dear Xanthias, don't!

X. Alkmena's son I can't be, and I won't,
Being a slave and mortal man beside.

DI. I know you're angry, and you're justified:
Even if you should beat me, I'll be dumb;
But if again in all the time to come

I take your things, then may the devil claim us,
Self, wife, and child, and—bleary Archidamus!

X. That's a good oath to swear in your position.
I take your bargain on that last condition.

[XANTHIAS *changes back to* HERAKLES.]

CHORUS. (*To XANTHIAS.*)

Now you've got the dress you wore 590
A short while in the scene before,
You must just brace up and show
Your ancient braggadocio.
Mould your manners once again
On the real "Ercles vein."

- If you babble, if you flinch,
 If courage fails you at a pinch,
 Your inevitable doom
 Is the bundle to resume.
- X. Excellent advice, no doubt,
 But I too have thought it out.
 This is how it seems to me :
 He's that cunning, should he see
 Fortune smile, for all his oaths 600
 He'll want again to change his clothes !
 Still, I'll make a brave impression
 With a truculent expression. [Noise within.
 High time, too : d'you hear them shout ?
 Here comes someone rushing out.

Enter AEACUS with several Slaves at his back.

- AE. Seize the dog-stealer ! quickly, I command,
 To meet his due reward.

DI. Trouble's at hand
 For someone !

[Two Slaves advance to arrest XANTHIAS.

- X. Go to blazes ! Don't touch me !
- AE. Eh ? fighting, my fine fellow ? We'll soon see.
 Ditylas ! Skeblyas ! Pardokas ! go ahead,
 Fight with him, capture him, alive or dead !

[They attack XANTHIAS, who swings his
 club effectively.

DI. (*Confidentially to AEACUS.*)

Ain't it too bad to see the blows he's dealing? 610
As if the fellow hadn't just been stealing,
And someone else's things, to make it worse!

AE. It's past belief!

X. (*Sarcastically.*) Oh yes, it's scandalous!
Look here, I never was here before to-day,
Or took the value of a hair away;
If not, I'm quite content to meet my fate.
And I will make an offer—fair and straight:
Torture my slave, and if you find a breath
Of evidence, then let me die the death.

AE. Which tortures, please?¹

X. (*Indifferently.*) Oh, anything—the rack,
The "cat" and triangles, and flay his back,
Take him and hang him by the thumbs or toes,
And pour the vinegar into his nose,
Peine forte et dure—I'm not particular,
Don't beat him with young leeks, that's all I bar.

AE. All right, and if I seriously maim
The fellow in the process, you can claim
The compensation to the full amount
Of the man's value.

X. Not on my account!

¹ Xanthias' challenge is in accordance with Athenian law, which only allowed slaves' evidence under torture, at the same time permitting the owner to stipulate that the slave should not be permanently damaged. Xanthias is generous.

He's wholly in your hands ; so take him hence.

AE. No, here ; you ought to hear his evidence.

(*To DIONYSUS.*)

Now, you, put down your bundle, and take care,
None of your lying here, sir !

DI. I declare

I'm an immortal, touch me if you dare ! 630

AE. What's that ?

DI. I'm Dionysus, son of Zeus,
And that's my slave.

AE. (*To XANTHIAS.*) Hear that ?

X. A good excuse !

The better subject he for you to thrash,
Being a god he'll never feel the lash.

DI. Why, then, since you too claim to be divine,
You'd better get a blow for each of mine !

X. All right. (*To AE.*) Whichever of us two you spy
Caring one jot, or uttering a cry,
Take him for the impostor.

AE. Breeding tells !

You're the real gentleman, whatever else ; 640
Justice is what you like. Off with your coats !

X. How are you going to test us fairly ?

AE. Oh, 't's

Easy, a blow in turn to each one.

X. Yes.

There, catch me flying signals of distress !

[*AEACUS hits XANTHIAS, who makes no sign.*

AE. Well, I've just hit you.

X. (*Incredulously.*) No you didn't, though!

AE. I don't believe he felt it. Let me go

And hit the other. [*Hits* DIONYSUS.

DI. Tell me just *when*, please.

AE. Why, I did hit you.

DI. Then, why didn't I sneeze?

AE. Don't know. Another try at this man's shirt.

X. Make haste! [*AEACUS hits him much harder.*

Tut! tut!

AE. Why "Tut! tut!"? Are you hurt?

X. O lor, no! I just thought of an idea 650

About my festival in Diomea.

AE. What piety! Now him again. Here goes!

[*Hits* DIONYSUS *harder.*

DI. Yow!

AE. What's the matter?

DI. Knights, in the front rows!

AE. Why are you crying, then?

DI. Because they stink so

Of onions.

AE. *You're* all right, then?

DI. I should think so!

AE. Then I must give this man another blow.

[*Hits* XANTHIAS.

X. Ah!

AE. What's the matter?

X. Splinter in my toe.

AE. T'other one now! It's a hard case to try, though.

[Hits DIONYSUS.

DI. Apollo!—"Lord of Delos or of Pytho!"

X. He's hurt! D'you hear him call out when you
smote him? 660

DI. Not I! It was Hipponax I was quoting.

X. That's nothing! dust him well upon the haunch.

AE. Better than that! This time put out your paunch.

[Hits DIONYSUS.

DI. Poseidon!

X. Someone's hurt!

DI. —"Who rulest o'er

The grey sea's depths or the Aegean shore."

AE. No, by Demeter! I can not begin

To see which of you is a god. Go in;

The Master and Persephone will tell, 670

Because they both of them are gods as well.

DI. Quite true! I wish you'd thought of that before
I got a beating, for I'm pretty sore.

[They all go into the house.

THE PARABASIS.

The Chorus now faces the audience and sings.

Patroness of choral dance,

Comic Muse, advance! advance!

Come and take delight in listening to my song.

See the multitude in session,

Each man top of his profession.

THE FROGS

Oh! come hither and inspect the mighty throng;
 They love advertising more than Kleophon,
 From whose lips you can't expect
 Pure Athenian dialect, 679
 For a Thracian swallow roars there, very evil,
 And she makes a dismal row,
 Croaking on her foreign bough
 Like a nightingale—"I'm going to the devil;
 I'll be done for even if the voting's level."

THE LEADER.

'Tis the duty of the Chorus to administer advice;
 So our first suggestion is that you should drop
 all prejudice,
 Give all citizens equality, and end the reign of
 terror.
 And if anyone through Phrynichus's tricks has
 been in error,
 You should have the power, I claim, to set up
 those who then were spilt 690
 On their feet again, and freely cancel all their
 former guilt.
 Then I say there should not be a single outlaw
 in the city;
 For when men have fought in one engagement,
 isn't it a pity
 To concede Plateans' rights, and make a master
 of a slave?
 Not that I could find a word of blame for
 honouring the brave,

'Twas your only act of wisdom;—but, consistently, you ought
To forgive your kith and kin who ask for pardon,
 who have fought
On your decks, they and their fathers, valiantly
 in many a fray.
Therefore use your native wisdom, let your anger
 fade away, 700
Let us call them all our brothers, let us give
 them all their right;
Welcome all again, ungrudging, who will help
 us in the fight.
If we hold our heads so high, and make ourselves
 so hard to please
While the ship of state is straining in the trough
 of heavy seas,
Have a care, Athenian people, lest the day of
 reckoning
Bring us, all too late, conviction that we've done
 the foolish thing.

CHORUS.

If I'm sharp enough of vision
To remark with some precision
 The tricks of one who'll surely come to grief,
The next subject of my song
Will not trouble us for long,
 And his name is Kleigenes—the little thief!
 He will soon be gone, and that's a great relief!

THE FROGS

He's the worst of bath-attendants,
 Who maintain their independence 710
 By using soap that's much adulterated,
 So his temper's bad enough
 To make any pirate luff,
 Though he met him going home at night,
 belated,
 Without his stick and quite intoxicated.

THE LEADER.

Often we have thought the city makes the same
 discrimination
 'Twixt her men of worth and honour and the
 refuse of the nation,
 As between our ancient drachmae and this
 brand-new gold alloy;
 For the genuine old silver coins that now we
 don't employ 720
 Were the handsomest of pieces, by consent of
 everyone;
 Struck so neatly—none were better, ringing with
 the soundest tone,
 Counted sterling everywhere, in foreign countries
 and in Greece;
 Now they're superseded, and we use this nasty
 copper piece,
 With a shocking bad impression, hammered out
 but yesterday.
 Even so, with contumely we insult and turn away

Men of birth and self-respect, of honesty and
noble parts,
Educated in athletics, music, and the gentler arts;
Then we use for every purpose new arrivals in
the state,
Scoundrels and the sons of scoundrels, brazen
forehead, copper pate! 730
Such as would have been rejected as too
villainous to die,
When a scapegoat was selected by the town
in days gone by.
Come, then, change your foolish customs even
now, and make redress;
Once again employ your good men. If you do,
and have success,
There'll be credit in succeeding; and in failing,
being hanged'll
Give you thus much consolation, that the game
was worth the candle.

SCENE VI.

Enter from the house AEACUS and XANTHIAS.

AE. Your master's a real gentleman, he is!

X. Yes, wine and women are his only biz. 740

AE. Fancy, when all came out, you missed your beating
In spite of all the lies you kept repeating!

X. Hang him, though!

AE. Oh, that's just the thing slaves do
You do so, and I love to do it too!

X. You like it, then?

AE. It's simply heaven to me
When I can curse my master secretly!

X. What about muttering, when you're out of sight,
After your thrashing?

AE. That is my delight!

X. And meddling in his business?

AE. Nothing's near it!

X. And when they're talking, and you overhear
it?

750

AE. Why, then I'm in an ecstasy of joy.

X. And when you tell them all outside, my boy?

AE. I can't contain myself; it's simply grand!

X. Phoebus Apollo! Let me shake your hand!

Let us embrace! [*They do so.*]

And kindly tell me now,

By Zeus, the slave's own patron: what's this
row?

Who's calling out and making such a fuss
Inside?

AE. Euripides and Aeschylus.

X. Ah!

AE. There's a fine to do among the dead,
An insurrection coming to a head.

760

X. What's that from?

AE. There's a custom in these parts
Among Professionals—I mean of the Fine
Arts—:

The chief of each Profession has his food
In the townhall, and a seat next Pluto.

X. Good.

AE. And keeps it till another shall appear
Still cleverer, and then he has to clear.

X. Why should that trouble Aeschylus's rest?

AE. He held the throne of Tragedy, as best
In that department.

X. Well, who has it now? 770

AE. Then came Euripides, and gave a show:
Spouted to all the burglars, footpads, thieves,
And all the crowd of rogues that Hell receives.
And when they heard his captious special-
pleading,
His twists and turns, so charmingly misleading,
They simply lost their heads, and thought they
never
Had seen a poet so extremely clever.
He got conceited, claimed to be enthroned
Instead of Aeschylus.

X. Wasn't he stoned?

AE. Lor, no! The mob got yelling to try the case,
And find out which of them deserved the place.

X. The mob of knaves did? 781

AE. Yes, they yelled sky-high.

X. But Aeschylus, could he find no ally?

AE. Virtue is scarce, as 'tis in yonder rows.

[*Pointing to the audience.*]

X. Well, then, what scheme has Pluto to propose?

AE. A competition on the spot to try

And test their skill in poetry.

X. Then why

Did Sophokles, too, not put in a claim?

AE. By Jove! not he, though! Sophokles, when he came,

Shook hands with Aeschylus, and kissed him fair,

While *he* made room for him upon his chair. 790

And now he means—this is his actor's¹ tale—

To take the bye, and, should his friend prevail,

To keep his place; if not, he will contend

Against Euripides to the bitter end.

X. Will it come off, d'you think?

AE. Yes, in a minute;

And then their cunning tricks will all be in it.

Why, they will weigh the verses in the scales!

X. What? like a sheep, to see if the weight fails?²

AE. Compasses, measures, two-foot rules they'll take,

And hods——

799

X. Why, is it bricks they want to make?

¹ Kleidemides by name.

² The lambs offered at the Festival of Apaturia had to be of a particular weight, and, as each was brought, it was the fashion for the bystanders to cry out, "Too small!"

AE. And wedges ; for Euripides avers

He'll have the plays examined verse by verse.

X. I expect that Aeschylus was pretty cross !

AE. He looked just like a bull that's going to toss !

X. And who's to be the judge ?

AE. That was the fix,

For with the Athenians Aeschylus didn't mix,

So men of taste were rather hard to find.

X. He thought them all burglariously inclined !

AE. And none but an Athenian could be judge

Of poet's brains ; the rest he called mere
fudge.

Your master came ; they put it in his hands 810

Because it is the craft he understands.

But let's go in, for when our masters wax

In earnest, there is trouble for our backs.

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS. (*In Aeschylean metre.*)

Dire is the wrath that the depth of the thun-
derer's heart is preparing.

Glancing aside at his foe as he sharpens his teeth
for the tearing,

Wily at word-play ; in frenzy his eye will roll
To match the madness of his soul.

Battles of words will be fought with crests
waving and morions glinting,

Catherine-wheeling of splinters, and chips of
the battle-field's dinting ;

Woe to the wretch, when the lord of the
mighty phrase 820

His cavalry of speech arrays!

Then the one rearing the crest of his shaggy
mane, bristling, horrid,

Knitting together the brows of his terrible
leonine forehead,

Volleying riveted words with their planks
up-torn,

Will roar a Titan blast of scorn.

But the glib tongue of the other, well skilled in
the testing of verses,

Loosing the reins of a spirit that recks not of
justice or mercies,

Splitting of hairs and of words, into dust will
grind

The mighty labours of his mind.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

SCENE: *The Court-house of Hades, arranged like an Athenian Lawcourt, with a ballot-box and voting pebbles upon the table. PLUTO and DIONYSUS are on the Bench.*

EURIPIDES. I'll not withdraw! Press your advice no longer. 830

In poetry I claim to be the stronger.

DI. Why silent, Aeschylus? hear what he says?

EUR. Aloof and scornful at first! So in all his plays
He works in the portentous grandiose!

DI. Dear man! not such big words, or else you'll lose.

EUR. I know him; I have seen through him of old,
A maker of savage heroes, bad and bold,
A mouth without a bridle, curb or door,
Uncrushable, talking bombast by the score!

AESCHYLUS. Really, you kitchen-garden goddess'¹
brat? 840

This from you, gatherer of twaddly chat,
You beggar's playwright, tatterdemallion's bard?
Shall you get off scot-free for this?

¹ Euripides' mother is supposed to have been a seller of herbs.

DI. Hold hard!

“Nor vex his soul to choler with thy spite.”

AESCH. Not I! until I prove what slender right
The cripple maker has for talking grand.

DI. Boys, a black lamb! a hurricane's at hand!¹

AESCH. O writer of *pas seuls* in Cretan fashion!

O introducer of incestuous passion! 850

DI. Respected Aeschylus, I prithee, cease!

Away with you, you scamp Euripides!

Take shelter from the hailstones, if you're wise,

Or some enormous phrase, your head's own size,

Will crack your skull and spill the—*Telephus*!²

And you, sir, do not lose your temper thus;

In gentler fashion be discussed, discuss.

For gentlemen and poets 'tis not meet

To wrangle like two fishwives in the street.

Now *you* start roaring like a log in the fire.

EUR. For my part I don't shirk it, but desire 860

To peck and be pecked; if you choose, begin. You

Shall cut my plays up, speeches, songs, and

sinews,—

S'help me! my *Peleus*, and my *Aeolus*,

My *Meleager*,—ay, and *Telephus*.

DI. Well, Aeschylus, and what advice have you?

¹ Black sheep were offered to the storms in sacrifice.

² The *Telephus* is the play of Euripides which was most criticised. Naturally, it has not been preserved. Aristophanes suggests that Euripides' head was full of it.

AESCH. I should have liked a different venue.

Here we are not on equal terms, you see.

DI. Why not?

AESCH. My writings didn't die with me :

His did, so he will have them to refer to.

But still, what you decide I must defer to. 870

DI. A brazier, someone, please, and some incense

For prayer before the strife of eloquence.

(*To the Chorus.*)

Sing to the Muses a short hymn meanwhile,

To guide our verdict in artistic style.

CHORUS.

Daughters of Zeus, ye Muses nine,

Holy maidens, who watch the souls

Of men whose hearts are a golden mine

Of words and the wisdom of all the schools,

When they enter the lists all agog for the trick

Of the logical "hank" and poetical "click,"

Come and behold the mighty pair ;

Two such champions never were seen— 880

Tongues with words enough and to spare,

And planks of poetry sawn off clean.

'Tis the struggle tremendous where Genius
wins;

The bell has been rung, the performance begins.

[*While the Chorus are singing the brazier
and incense have been brought in.*]

DI. Both make a prayer before you speak your line.

AESCH. Demeter, guardian of this soul of mine,
 May I prove worthy of thy holy choir!

[*Puts on incense.*]

DI. (*To EURIPIDES.*)

Now your turn ; put some incense on the fire.

EUR. No thanks ; they're different gods to whom I
 pray.

DI. Some private lot ? a brand-new coinage ?

EUR. Ay. 890

DI. H'm, amateur gods ! [*Shrugs his shoulders.*]

Offer up your prayer.

EUR. Hinge of the Tongue, and soul-sustaining Air,
 Cunning, and Nostrils keen with critic's scent,
 May I refute each hostile argument !

CHORUS.

Now we long to hear from you,
 Gentlemen of light and leading,
 What will be your first proceeding
 With the enemy in view.

Fury is upon their tongue,
 Both have got their manes erect,
 And their nerves are highly strung ;
 This is what we may expect :
He will speak with polished phrasing,
 Smoothed and sharpened with a file ;
He with Titan volleys blazing
 Scatter all his shifts and guile.

THE LEADER. Begin at once ; let each of you take
care that what he says is

Quite smart, unspoil't by metaphors or any
commonplaces.

EUR. My own just claim to the poet's name I keep
for later mention,

But now to his delinquencies I wish to draw
attention.

A fraud and charlatan was he, deceiving, over-
reaching

The audience, poor simple fools of Phrynichus's¹
teaching. 910

For first he set upon the stage one heavily-veiled
creature,

Achilles, perhaps, or Niobe—you couldn't see a
feature ;

They didn't even grunt — a mere gallantry
exhibition.

DI. No more they did.

EUR. The choir, meanwhile, without an
intermission,

Was struggling through four strings of tunes ;
they never spoke or heard it.

DI. *I* liked the silence, though ; in fact, I very much
preferred it

To the talking of the present day !

¹ The Tragic poet. He began to exhibit plays about ten years
before Aeschylus.

EUR. You must have been a flat, then!

DI. I think I was. But tell me, why did What's-'is-name do that, then?

EUR. Imposture, that the audience might sit there in distraction

Waiting for Niobe's remark, and miss the drama's action. 920

DI. The utter villain! Just to think he wasn't all I thought him!

(To AESCHYLUS, who is showing signs of impatience.)

Why do you yawn and look so cross?

EUR. Because I've fairly caught him. And when the play was halfway through, atop of all this drivel

He'd speak a dozen words or so, and then the very devil,

With scowling brows and nodding plumes, and perfectly unbillable

In any programme,—

AESCH. Woe is me!

DI. Sh! not another syllable!

EUR. But not a thing to understand.—

DI. *(To AESCH.)* Don't grind your teeth so fretfully.

EUR. But streams of Troy and counterscarps and griffin-vultures dreadfully

Emblazoned upon shields, and words with war-horse heads and trapping,

Whose meaning you could hardly guess.

DI. By Jove, instead of napping 930
I've lain awake myself, ere now, long hours of
night to ponder

On yellow horse-cocks—what a kind of fowl
are they, I wonder.

AESCH. A painted figurehead upon a ship, of course,
you dunce!

DI. Oh, I thought it meant Eryxis, he's a beak I
noticed once.

EUR. Even a cock without the horse one hardly
could defend

In Tragedy.

AESCH. But think what things your godless
hand has penned!

EUR. At all events not horse-cocks or goat-stags, or
suchlike travesties,

Like you, the kind of thing one sees in Oriental
tapestries.

You left the stage all verbiage, a mass of swollen
tumours

And hulking words. I starved it first, and so
reduced its humours,

With scraps of verse and wise discourse, and
vegetable messes,

Adding a flavour of small talk strained out of
critics' essays;

Then fed it up on monodies—Kephisophon's
ingredients,¹

Avoiding complicated thoughts and common-
place expedients.

The first man on explained the antecedents
of the story——

AESCH. Better than yours, and better than your
parents had before ye!

EUR. Then to each character I gave employment
from the start,

The women and the slaves as well each had to
say their part,

The masters, maidens, and old women, every
rank and station. 950

AESCH. I think that he deserves to die for such an
innovation.

EUR. 'Twas democratic!

DI. Tut! my friend, don't put it
quite in that form;

You're hardly suited to adopt the democratic
platform.

EUR. And then I taught the citizens the way to talk——

AESCH. Thou didst!

I would, ere that, that thou hadst burst asunder
in the midst.

¹ Euripides' principal actor, supposed to have had something to do with the composition of his plays, and also to have carried on an intrigue with the poet's wife.

EUR. To speak and write by subtle rules, and make
their verses trim ;

To use their wits and eyes and mind ; to quibble,
love, and scheme,

Suspect all motives, and to leave no stone un-
turned.

AESCH. That's true, 'tis!

EUR. I brought in things of common life—our simple
needs and duties ;

And upon this I take my stand—for *they* know
all about it ;

960

They would have criticised the least mistake,—I
never spouted

Big words to cheat their common sense, or court
sensation, bringing

Cygnus or Memnon on the stage with bells on
bridles ringing.

Our followers may be told apart—there's lots of
both in hell, sure!—

For his are like Phormisius and Megaenetus the
Welsher,

With trumpets, spears, and bristling beards, and
grins to split you asunder ;

While mine are such as Kleitophon and Thera-
menes the wonder.

DI. Theramenes? He's clever ; he's a fox at politics,
sir,

Who, if he plays to beat the ace, and finds he's
in a fix, sir,

Consults his sleeve without your leave, and always
wins the trick, sir. 970

EUR. Such is the wisdom I have taught,
And improved their powers of thought,
So that now they can disting-
uish anything from anything.
Specially they know much more
Of keeping house than e'er before,
Asking, "How does this thing go?"
"Who's got that?" "Where's so-and-so?"

DI. Yes, every man in Athens now, 980
When he comes in, begins to blow
His household up, and ask a lot
Of questions, this way: "Where's the pot?"
"Who's bitten off the minnow's head?"
"The dish I got last year is dead!"
"Where's the leek from yesterday?"
And "Who has nibbled the olive, pray?"
But hitherto their greatest sin is
That they used to sit like ninnies—
Gapy, gawky, piccanninies. 990

CHORUS.

"Bright Achilles, mark'st thou these?"
Have you got your answer ready?
Curb your passion and ride steady,
Or 'twill sweep you past the trees.¹

¹ *i.e.* out of the course. Olive trees were planted round the race-course.

Terribly he does accuse,
 Yet contain yourself, most valiant,
 Shorten sail, and only use,
 To begin with, your topgallant ; 1000
 Next increase it by degrees,
 Wait until the gods afford,
 What you want, a steady breeze,
 Then, close action, out and board !

THE LEADER. But, O thou first of all the Greeks to
 build high rime in towers
 And dignify the Stage, fling wide the floodgates
 of thy powers.

AESCH. The occasion moves my anger, ay, my
 inmost soul is vexed
 To have to answer *him* ; yet, lest he fancy me
 perplexed—
 Come, make reply, upon what grounds do poets
 win their laurels ?

EUR. For cleverness and counsel, and because we
 raise men's morals.

AESCH. But if instead you take away their virtue
 and their bravery, 1010
 And make the town a sink of all unmitigated
 knavery,
 What is your due ?

DI. Why, death of course ; you
 won't get him to answer.

AESCH. Look at the men you got from me,—what
 better could you want, sir ?

Men large of soul as large of limb, no civic duty-shirkers,

Not loafing impudently round, as now, no mischief-workers ;

But breathing naught but lances, spears, and helmets plumed and burnished,

And casques, and greaves, and courage, with seven-oxhide armour furnished.

EUR. At it again! He'll drive me crazy with his helmet factory!

DI. What did you do to turn them out so very satisfactory?

Oh, speak, and do not wither us with hauteur so enormous. 1020

AESCH. I wrote a drama full of war.

DI. Which of them? pray inform us.

AESCH. *Seven against Thebes*. And all who saw it fell in love with fighting.

DI. A great mistake ; you've painted Thebes too much in war delighting.

Consider yourself censured for it.

AESCH. Ay, sir, but the fact is These are the very things you ought, but do not choose, to practise.

And then I brought *The Persians* out, to celebrate a glorious

Engagement, and to inculcate the wish to be victorious.

DI. Yes, when they said "Darius is dead,"¹ I own I
 jumped for jo-öy,
 And all the Chorus smote their hands together,
 crying "yau-oi!"²

AESCH. This is the poet's proper work. Now see
 from the beginning

What benefits for all mankind our noblest have
 been winning. 1030

Orpheus preached Vegetarianism and Initiation,
 Musaeus taught us Medicine and the rules of
 Divination,

Hesiod Agriculture, while immortal Homer's
 charm is

That he can speak in words unique of marshal-
 ling of armies

And valiant deeds.

DI. Well, Pantokles could not
 have got the drop of it;

He put his helmet on and tried to tie the crest
 atop of it.³

AESCH. But many other heroes did, and Lamachus⁴
 among them,

¹ Dionysus evidently does not remember the play accurately. Darius was dead long before, and his ghost appears in the play.

² This queer exclamation, which impressed him so much, does not occur in our editions of *The Persians*.

³ The crest was fastened on with a nut inside the helmet.

⁴ One of the commanders in the Syracusan expedition. While he was alive Aristophanes had abused him; now that he is dead he speaks well of him, as he does of everyone except Euripides.

From whom I too have copied many gallant
feats and sung them : 1040

Of Patrokles, and them of Troy, a lion-hearted
nation,

To stir a man at bugle-call to deeds of emulation.
But Phaedras—no, nor Sthenobees of reputations
shady ;

And none can say I e'er portrayed the amours
of a lady.

EUR. (*Scornfully.*) You never dealt with Aphrodite !

AESCH. Nor, God help me, shall I !

But over you and yours, you know, she ruled
tyrannically,

So that she laid you low yourself.¹

DI. A hit, by Jove ! it's true, sir ;

You marred the lives of others' wives, and that's
come back on you, sir !

EUR. What damage yet doth Athens get from all
my Sthenoboeas ?

AESCH. The noble wives of noble men you've filled
with vile ideas,

From shame at your Bellerophons, the hemlock-
habit's taking. 1050

EUR. D'you mean to say the Phaedra story's one of
my own making ?

AESCH. Oh no ; but if there's wickedness, the poet
should conceal it,

¹ Referring to his troubles with his wife and Kephisophon the actor.

And not parade it on the stage or openly reveal it.
When we are boys the schoolmaster can give us
all our teaching,
But when we come to man's estate the Poets
do the preaching ;
Therefore our lessons must be good.

EUR. But spouting your tremendous
Parnassus-Lycabettus stuff will never save or
mend us ;
You ought to speak in human style.

AESCH. But, villain, if you try to
Use lofty thought and sentiment, your diction
must be high too,
And you'd expect that demi-gods would have
their phrases bigger 1060
Just as they wear the finer clothes, and cut the
finer figure.

And when I put this on the stage correct in
forms and matters,
You spoilt it.

EUR. How ?

AESCH. By bringing kings in, all
in rags and tatters
To gain compassion.

EUR. What's the harm ?

AESCH. Things are at such a pitch, man,
That no one will fit out a ship, although he's
quite a rich man,

But whines about his "poverty," and wears a ragged garment.

DI. Yes, with a good thick worsted coat beneath, deceitful varmint!

And turns up at the Fish-market when his appeal is granted.

AESCH. And then you taught the talky-talky nonsense that's supplanted

Athletic sports, and made the seamen mutiny—
a high time.

They had debating matters with their officers!

In my time 1070

They only understood, I think, what "rations" and "ahoy" meant!

DI. But that's all over; arguing is now their sole employment.

AESCH. Any punishment invented

He deserves who represented

Women wantonness contriving,

In the very temples bearing

Children; others

Even marrying their brothers,

Or declaring

That the living are not living! 1080

Things like this have made our city—

More's the pity—

Overrun of late with ribald

Men who scribbled;

Rest not though on one position,
 But deliver from your quiver many a different
 shaft of censure ;
 All your armoury unfold ;
 Oh ! with subtle inquisition
 Asking questions new and old.
 Were you ever counted clever, now or never
 make a venture !
 Do you fear the audience here are not up to
 your display ?
 Do you think their skulls are hollow ? 1110
 That they'll need a crib to follow ?
 Never mind it, you will find it very much the
 other way.
 They've been out on foreign service :
 Book in hand you see them stand, they can tell
 you what is what ;
 They were always fairly smart,
 And to-day their brain and nerve is
 Razor-edged, so pluck up heart ;
 Beyond their depth you cannot step, they're
 such a literary lot.

SCENE II.

The testing of the Prologues and Lyrics.

EUR. Well, then, I take his Prologues first to test,
 For that comes naturally earliest. 1120
 The statement of his subjects is obscure.

DI. Which will you test?

EUR. Why, lots of them, to be sure.

First from the *Oresteia* kindly read.

DI. Silence in court! Now, Aeschylus, proceed.

AESCH. "Nether-world Hermes, thou beneath whose
eye

The Father's powers are placed, oh! grant my
prayer,

Be my preserver and ally in fight,

For to this land I come and do return."

Find any faults in that?

EUR. Yes, twelve or more.

DI. Why, all the lines together are but four! 1130

EUR. But each has twenty errors for its share.

AESCH. You know that's nonsense.

EUR. Do you think I care?

DI. Stop, Aeschylus, don't read another line:

It's clear you'll only get an extra fine

For every fresh quotation, and the score

Is running up against you for those four.

AESCH. I stop for *him*!

DI. That's the advice I've given.

EUR. He starts with a mistake as high as heaven.

AESCH. What's my mistake? I'll thank you to explain.

EUR. Why, certainly! Just say the lines again.

AESCH. "Nether-world Hermes, thou beneath whose eye

The Father's powers are placed, oh! grant my
prayer——"

EUR. Does not Orestes say this at the tomb
Of his dead father?

AESCH. So you may presume. 1140

EUR. What does he say there is 'neath Hermes' eye?
His father's murder and wife's treachery?

AESCH. No; 'tis a title of the "Luck-god," rather,
Meaning he holds his office from the Father.

EUR. Then it's a worse fault than I meant to show,
That Zeus above should give him rank below.

DI. He'd be his father's grave-robber at that!

AESCH. (*To DI.*) Your wine lacks bouquet, and your
joke is flat. 1150

DI. Aeschylus, read out what comes next; and you,
With eagle eye, keep the mistakes in view.

AESCH. "Be my preserver and ally in fight,
For to this land I come and do return."

EUR. How he repeats himself, the clever fellow!

AESCH. Repeat myself! How?

EUR. Look at the phrase, I'll tell you:
He says that he "returned" and that he "came,"
Now, "coming" and "returning" are the same.

DI. By Jove! it's just as if the navy said,
"Lend me a shovel, Bill, or else a spade."

AESCH. Far from it. Your incessant chattering 1160
Has warped your sense: my lines are just the thing.

DI. On what grounds, tell me.

AESCH. He who *has* a home,
When he gets back there can be said to "come."

He simply *comes*, and nothing else is meant ;
Both words apply to one in banishment.

DI. Good ! Now, Euripides, for your attack.

EUR. Legally, I say, he never did come back,
For he stole in without the Government's leave.

DI. Good too ! But what you mean I can't conceive.

EUR. Next line, please. 1169

DI. Yes, make haste, for goodness' sake
Go on ; and you—look out for the mistake !

AESCH. " And at this barrow on my sire I call
To hear and listen."

EUR. There he goes again !
" Listen " and " hear " are just the same, that's plain.

AESCH. You idiot ! he was talking to the dead,
And they can't hear a thing, though three times said.

But how d'you write *your* Prologues ?

EUR. You shall see ;
And if you notice a tautology,
Any extraneous matter, or a trace
Of padding, then—*conspuez* in my face !

DI. Do say one ; I am dying for a sight 1180
Of the correctness of the lines you write.

EUR. " A happy man was Oedipus at first——"¹

AESCH. Not he, by Jove ! but utterly accurst :

¹ From the *Antigone* of Euripides.

Doomed ere his birth the oracle to fulfil,
 And, yet unborn, I say, his sire to kill,
 How was he, then, a happy man at first?

EUR. "Then fell at last into the very worst
 Misfortune."

AESCH. No, not he! he never rose
 Out of it. First, an infant, they expose
 Him in a bit of crockery in a storm, 1190
 Not to grow up and do his father harm;
 And after that, with both his ankles swelling,
 He drifts away to Polybus's dwelling;
 Then marries an old woman in his prime—
 And she was his own mother all the time—
 Then blinds himself.

DI. He was happy after all,
 Compared with an Athenian admiral!¹

EUR. Nonsense! I think my Prologues very fine.

AESCH. Well, I won't nibble at them line by line,
 But, with the help of Heaven for the task,
 I'll overthrow them with a pocket flask. 1200

EUR. A pocket flask! you! mine!

AESCH. Yes, one will do 't;
 For any trisyllabic word will suit
 With your constructions, as—a counterpane,
 A pocket book or flask; I'll make it plain
 Directly.

¹ Erasinides and the others who were executed after the victory of Arginusae.

EUR. Eh? you will?

AESCH. Most certainly.

DI. Recite the lines at once and let us see.

EUR. "Egyptus, as the ancient story goes,
Bringing his fifty sons across the wave
And reaching Argos——"¹

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

EUR. Was that your pocket flask? Confound it, then!

DI. Recite another and let's try again.

EUR. "Dionysus, who adown Parnassus' slopes, 1210
With wand and fawnskins 'mid the torches' gleam,
Leaps in the dances——"²

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

DI. Oh dear! the flask again! we're badly hit.

EUR. But I assure you 'twill not matter a bit;
Here's one in which he cannot make it fit—
"No mortal man there is in all things blest:
Either with noble birth he lives in want,
Or being base-born——"³

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

DI. Euripides!

EUR. What is it?

DI. Shorten sail. 1220

This pocket flask is like to blow a gale.

EUR. I should not heed it—no, by mother earth!
I'll show him now how little it is worth.

¹ From the *Archelaus*. ² From the *Hypsipyle*.

³ From the *Sthenoboea*.

DI. Well, try again, and give it a wide berth.

EUR. "Kadmus, when leaving the Sidonian town,
Son of Agenor——"¹

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."
Carrying oil

DI. That flask, my friend, I think you'd better buy,
Or it will ruin all our Prologues.

EUR. Why?

I buy it from *him*?

DI. Good counsel.

EUR. I refuse it.

I've lots of Prologues where he cannot use it. 1230
"The son of Tantalus to Pisa coming
With his swift horses——"²

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

DI. He's made it fit again, you must allow.

(*To* AESCH.) Good sir, restore it to him, anyhow;
You'll get another beauty for a penny!

EUR. Not yet, by Jove! I've still got a good many.
"Oeneus in harvest——"³

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

EUR. Do let me say the whole line, if you please.

"Oeneus in harvest gathering plenteous store 1240
While sacrificing——"

AESCH. "Lost his pocket flask."

DI. While he was at it? Where were the police?

EUR. Never mind *them*. Answer this once again—

"Zeus, as the words of all true men maintain——"⁴

¹ From the *Phrixus*. ² From the *Iphigeneia in Tauris*.

³ From the *Meleager*. ⁴ From the *Melanippe*.

DI. Oh, stop! He'll say "he lost his flask" and
do you.

That wretched flask sticks just as closely to you,
As any styè sticks on an eyelid. Take
The Lyrics for a change, for goodness' sake!

EUR. Well, I can prove that here too he's a slattern,
And writes them all upon a single pattern. 1250

CHORUS. (*In surprise.*)

What will come next?
Here's a perplexed
Question for us to debate,—
What Euripides
Fancies that he's
Able to depreciate
In the Lyrics of one
Who is second to none,
Unique, unapproachable, great.
What mud will he fling
At Tragedy's king?

I tremble to think of his fate. 1260

EUR. Mighty fine songs, indeed! I'll show you soon;
I'll cut them all down to a single tune.

DI. Look here, I'll keep the score, if I am able,
With a few counters borrowed from the table.

EUR. "Hear'st thou, Achilles, the clamour of fight
and the trumpet?

Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to
defend us?

Hermes our sire we revere who dwell by the
shores of Avernus.

Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to
defend us?"

DI. Aeschylus, there are two "blows" to your score.

EUR. "List, son of Atreus, thou war-lord and best of
Achaeans. 1270

Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to
defend us?"

DI. Aeschylus, there is another "blow" more.

EUR. "Speak not aloud! The bee-priestesses open
the portals of Artemis' temple.

Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to
defend us?

Lord of my song, I can tell of the omens that
fell on the journey.

Blow! Lackaday, why comest thou not to
defend us?"

DI. Great Zeus! a sheer extravagance of "blow"!
I've quite lost count. I've got a strain, I know;
A bath and massage is the thing I want. 1281

[Makes as if he was going away.]

EUR. No! wait and listen to the "standing chant"

As well, worked up with string accompaniment.

DI. All right; but, mind you, no more punishment.

EUR. "How the two-throned might of Achaea, of
Hellas's offspring,

Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!

Sendeth the Sphinx as a shameless ordainer of evil,
Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!

Furious bird with the spear and the hand of
avengers,

Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle! 1290

Giving a meal to the ravening hounds of the
heavens,

Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!

And the host that is siding with Ajax.

Tiddle-diddle! tiddle-diddle!"

DI. What's "Tiddle-diddle"? Is it Persian talk,
Or did you pick it up at some rope-walk?

AESCH. Scoff as you please! *I* brought the lyric rhyme
From noble sources to a noble prime,
Nor wished to trespass on the holy ground
Where Phrynichus his music erst had found; 1300
Euripides, however, is not nice,
He gets his repertoire from haunts of vice,
Meletus' drinking-songs, the trills and shakes
Of Carian flutes, from Music Halls and wakes.
I'll soon expose him. Let me have a zither—
And yet, for him the castanets were fitter!
Hither, Euripidean muse, and see
How well these songs will suit your company.

*[An ill-favoured person with large feet
comes forward with the castanets.]*

DI. She never played the wanton, no, not she!
She's just about as ugly as can be.

AESCH. "Halcyon dickies that twitter and sing¹
 On the waves of the restless blue, 1310
 (*Castanets.*) (Tuk-a-tuk!)
 Drenching your skins with sprinkling wing
 And wetting them through and through.
 (Tuk-a-tuk!)
 Ye spi-i-i-iders that under the roof
 (Tuk-a-tuk! tuk-a-tuk!) in the gloom
 Of the corners are spi-i-i-inning your woof,
 The work of the musical loom;
 Where the porpoise comes round at the bo'sun's
 shrill sound
 To the dingy black bows, and in fun
 (Tuk-a-tuk!)
 Flings up to the ship a prophetic tip²
 On the number of miles of the run.
 (Tuk-a-tuk!) 1319
 Oh, the flower of the vine and the tendril fine
 That eases our cares and alarms!
 (Tuk-a-tuk!)
 Oh, the bloom and the shape of the glorious grape!
 Throw round me, childie, your arms——"

¹ These Lyrics are not selections from Euripides, as the former were from Aeschylus, but pure inventions, by way of parody, with an occasional line or reminiscence of a line from some play, with faults of all kinds in them.

² This mention of "racecourses and prophecies" in combination, which most commentators consider sheer intentional nonsense, may be taken as the only allusion to sporting prophecies in the classics, if it is not only prophetic itself. To anyone who has been on an ocean liner the convenience of such behaviour on the part of the porpoise is obvious.

D'you see that foot?

DI. Yes; it's an awful sight.

AESCH. I don't mean hers, but in the verse.

DI. All right.

AESCH. So much for Choral Lyrics. Now to show
The way one of his Monodies would go. 1330

O murky night, shrouded in gloom,
Say why didst thou send to my room
Out of the dark a nightmare dread,
Clad in black garments like the dead—
A minister of death
With breathless breath,
Child of black night,
A shuddering sight
With bloody, bloody looks
And talons long as hooks?

Maidens, light a lamp, I pray;
From the river where you've brought a
Pitcher full, go, warm the water,
And I'll wash the dream away. 1340

By the God of storm and thunder!
That's it, I see.
Neighbours come and see the wonder—
Gone is Glyce!
And my cock she did "convey"!
Mountain Nymphs, to you I pray!

O Mania,¹ catch her! And I, to my pain,
Was closely attending to business instead;

¹ A common name for a female slave.

My fingers were twirling a spindle of thread
And making a be-e-e-autiful skein

To sell in the market
when it got dark.

1350

But he flew up, up, up, in the air

With the fairy-like tip of his wing,
And left me below with care, yea, care,

And tears I shed, I
Shed tears from my eye,

Shed tears from my eye, poor thing!

Sons of Ida, men of Crete,

Take your arrows, I entreat,

With limber stride patrol the grounds ;

And may Artemis the fair

Come and bring her pack of hounds

1360

And search the house through everywhere.

And thou too, brandishing in thy nimble hands,

Hekate, daughter of Zeus, two burning brands,

Give me light on the road

To Glyce's abode,

That I may enter in and see

If she has got my stolen property.

DI. Enough of Lyrics!

AESCH. (*With disgust.*) I should say it is!

I want to take him to the balances,

Which is the only way to bring conviction,

By proving our respective weight of diction.

DI. Come here, then, if I really must try these

Two poets like a man that's selling cheese.

CHORUS. Geniuses do take such pains! 1370
 No one else would have the brains
 'To invent a fresh commodity
 Full of such new-fangled oddity.
 By the —! if a casual man
 Had informed me of this plan,
 I'd not have believed him, I'd
 Have taken for granted that he lied!

SCENE III.

SCENE: *The weighing. A large pair of scales is brought into court; DIONYSUS is standing beside them.*

DI. Now then, you two stand by the scales!
EUR. All right.
 DI. Take hold of them, and each in turn recite,
 And don't let go till I say "Tck, tck!" 1380
EUR. Yes.

[They each take hold of their scale.

DI. Now speak your line into the balances.
 EUR. "Oh that the good ship Argo ne'er had flown!"¹
 AESCH. "Spercheius river, where the oxen stray."²
[AESCHYLUS' scale drops.

DI. Tck, tck! let go! Yes, this one certainly
 Has gone right down.
EUR. But why? I cannot see.

DI. Because he, like a man that deals in wool,
 Put in a river; rivers make it full

¹ From *Medea*.

² From *Philoktetes* (?).

Of water ; that, you know, gives weight to things.

The line you put was light with feathery wings.

EUR. Let's speak another and match weight for weight.

DI. Catch hold again, then.

EUR. Ready all.

DI. Now say it. 1390

EUR. "Persuasion hath no temple save the tongue."¹

AESCH. "Of all the gods Death only loves not gifts."²

[AESCHYLUS' *scale drops*.

DI. Let go, let go! Yes, down again his goes :

He put in Death, the heaviest of woes.

EUR. Persuasion I ; what better could you find ?

DI. Oh, that's a flimsy thing without a mind !

But look another of your heavy weights out

To pull your scale down, something large and stout.

EUR. (*Rather nervously to DIONYSUS.*)

What sort of thing had I best say? Won't you

Make a suggestion ?

(DI. *Sarcastically.*) Oh yes, this will do—

"Achilles threw two singles and a four."³ 1400

Speak, for the third time, your last chance to score.

EUR. "The iron-sheathed log in his right hand he took."⁴

AESCH. "For chariot heaped on chariot, corpse on corpse."⁵ [AESCHYLUS' *scale drops*.

¹ From *Antigone*. Next line: "Her altar is within the soul of man."

² From *Niobe*. Next line: "Before him only is Persuasion dumb."

³ From *Telephus*.

⁴ From *Meleager*.

⁵ From *Glaucois Potnieus*.

DI. This time as well he's fooled you.

EUR. How d'you mean?

DI. He put two chariots and two corpses in—

Too heavy for a hundred Fellaheen.

AESCH. Let's have no more of single lines, but put

Him in, child, wife—Kephisophon to boot—

And let him take his books down from the shelf

And pile them in, and sit on top himself!

And I'll put just two verses by their side. 1410

DI. (*To himself.*)

The men are friends of mine. I'll not decide.

When you're impartial it is hard to judge,¹

And against neither will I feel a grudge,

For one I like, and one I think is clever.

PLUTO. So, after all, you'll fail in your endeavour!

DI. (*To PLUTO.*) If I decide?

PL. You shall take one of these,

Not to be disappointed, which you please.

DI. Thanks. (*To the poets.*) Listen now, think over
your reply;

I came down here to fetch a poet.

EUR. Why?

DI. That Athens and the Drama both may thrive.

Now all depends on what advice you give; 1420

Whichever gives the best I mean to take.

First about Alkibiades—state your views,

¹ Cases in law at Athens were decided mostly by sentiment, the evidence being of quite secondary importance.

For Athens is in hard labour what to say.

PL. What is her own opinion of him, pray?

DI. She loves, and hates, and cannot do without him.

Now, both of you, say what you think about him.

EUR. "I hate a citizen by nature slow

To help his country, swift to work her woe,
Keen to his own, to her best interests blind."

DI. Good. (*To AESCH.*) Now, sir, what suggestion
can you find? 1430

AESCH. "Rear not a lion's whelp within the state;
But if you do, knock under and obey it!"

DI. By Zeus! I can't make up my mind, not nearly:

This one¹ speaks cleverly, the other² clearly.

So I'll put one more question. Answer me!

What chance has Athens of prosperity?

EUR. I know, and I should like to tell you. 1440

DI. Speak!

EUR. When present faithlessness for faith we take,
And faith for faithlessness.

DI. What *can* you mean?

Talk far less learnedly and far more plain.

EUR. Our safety lies in this: to take away

Our confidence from those we trust to-day,

And use the men we have not used of late.

Our present plans not being fortunate,

Their opposite are bound to bring success.

DI. A Palamedes! Oh, what cleverness! 1450

(*To AESCH.*) What's your advice?

¹ Euripides.

² Aeschylus.

AESCH. What is the city's mood?

First tell me this. Whom does she use? The good?

DI. Hates them like poison.

AESCH. Does she like the ill?

DI. Not she, but uses them against her will.

AESCH. Nothing can stop her going to the bad,

If neither party suits her—shawl nor plaid!

DI. Discover something, that is, if you want

To reappear there; otherwise you shan't. 1460

AESCH. I'd tell it there, but do not care to here.

DI. Please don't. Send up to them some word of cheer.

AESCH. Count they the enemy's land their own to be,

And give their own up to the enemy,

Count ships their income, and their income waste.

DI. Good. Yet the jurymen secure a taste.¹

PL. Decide.

DI. I have decided. Have you guessed?

I will select—"the one my soul likes best."²

EUR. Remember what a solemn oath you swore

To take me back. I was your friend before. 1470

DI. "My tongue hath sworn, but³ I'll choose—"

Aeschylus.

EUR. What have you done, you villain! Scandalous!

DI. (*Innocently.*) I've only given Aeschylus first place.

EUR. And then you dare to look me in the face!

¹ *i.e.* The jurymen won't think it waste. They will swallow up all that is available in fees. ² Quoting a children's game.

³ Quoting from *Hippolytus*: "My tongue hath sworn it, but my soul is free" (cf. line 101).

DI. (*Blandly*.) "What's villainy, if the audience think it well?"¹

EUR. Wretch, will you leave me dead down here in Hell?

DI. (*Sarcastically*.)

"Who knows if living is not being dead,"²
A breath your dinner,³ sleep a feather-bed?

PL. Go inside, Dionysus.

DI. Wherefore, pray?

PL. That I may feast you ere you sail away.

DI. Thanks, that is quite a good idea, you know. 1480
(*To the audience*.)

I'm not displeas'd the matter's ended so. [*Exeunt*.

CHORUS. Happy is the man who plies

Natural abilities

Until a measure of perfection they attain.

Many things will go to show it:

He has proved himself the Poet,

So that now he's off to see his home again;

He himself and all his nation,

Every friend and each relation,

Reap the profit of his cultivated brain. 1490

What a blessed thing that he's

Not a friend of Socrates,

To be sitting by him, chattering all day,

¹ Quoting from *Aeolus*: "What's villainy, if the doers think it well?"

² Quoting from the *Polyidas*:—

"Who knows if living is not being dead,
While death is reckoned life by those below?"

The sentiment is alluded to in lines 1080 and 420.

³ There is a pun in the original which is lost in the English; but the reference is to Euripides' invocation to "soul sustaining air" in line 1092.

And in execrable taste
 Passing over as misplaced
 What is really most important in the play!
 But composing useless essays
 On fine words and quibbling messes
 Is a lunatic's performance I should say.

SCENE IV.

SCENE : PLUTO *enthroned*. DIONYSUS, AESCHYLUS,
and XANTHIAS prepared to depart.

PL. Aeschylus, good luck, farewell! 1500
 Keep our city 'neath the spell
 Of sound advice, and educate
 The foolish ones—they're half the state.
 And take these with you : give this knife
 To Kleophon to end his life.
 Here's a rope, which may afford
 Entertainment to the Board,
 Where, to get both ends to meet,
 Nikomachus and Myrmex cheat.
 Here is hemlock, which I think
 Archenomus will like to drink.
 Tell them to get under weigh
 And come to me without delay.
 If they stay or look behind them, 1510
 Loitering when I command them,
 By Apollo ! I will bind them
 And like runaways will brand them ;
 With Adeimantus the white feather
 I'll send them all to Hell together.

AESCH. I will do so. Will you please
 Give my chair to Sophokles
 To keep, in case the Fates ordain
 I ever come down here again.
 Sophokles—for him I reckoned
 Certainly to be my second.
 But remember, I entreat, 1520
 That that dirty, lying cheat
 Chair of mine must never fill,
 No, not even against his will!

PL. Let the sacred torches blaze,
 Be his escort on the road,
 To his own great music raise
 Echoes of a choral ode.

*[Chorus comes forward waving torches
 as the actors go off.]*

CHORUS. First may all happiness shine on the path
 of the poet returning, 1528
 Rising again to the Sunlight, O grant it ye
 spirits of Earth!
 Then to our city the key to the glory for
 which she is yearning,
 Stilling the clashing of armour and banishing
 hardship and dearth.
 Let Kleophon and the others who with him
 for battle are burning
 Fight, if they please, far away in the barbarous
 land of his birth.

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